

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method for retrieving information using a server system coupled to a centralized database and at least one client system, said method comprising:

defining, by a user, purchasing criteria;

storing user preference information in the database including a list of functions defined by a user of the at least one client system for inclusion within a function menu, wherein each function is associated by the user with at least one universal resource locator (URL) and a computer-implemented command for performing the associated function, wherein the computer-implemented command is configured by the user to perform the associated function at at least one remote vendor web server corresponding to the at least one associated URL;

selecting an object from an electronic document displayed on client system;

displaying [[a]] the function menu on the client system to prompt the user to select a desired function from the list of user-defined functions included within the function menu to apply the selected function to a to-the selected object, the selected function including a purchasing function associated with a plurality of vendor web sites wherein the purchasing function automatically initiates a purchase of an item using the plurality of vendor web sites and the purchasing criteria, the item associated with the selected object, wherein the selected object is an object included within an electronic document displayed on the at least one client system and identified by the user;

transmitting receiving, at the server system, the selected object and the selected function from the at least one client system to the server system;

processing the selected object by applying the selected function and the purchasing criteria to the selected object at the server system to produce generate a processed object, the processing further including:

generating a plurality of retrieving from the database the at least one URL and the computer-implemented command associated with universal resource locators (URLs) based on the selected object and the selected function;

executing the retrieved computer-implemented command using the selected object to generate the processed object;

transmitting the processed object from the server system to a plurality of remote vendor web servers at least one remote vendor web server corresponding to each of the plurality of URLs the at least one retrieved URL, the plurality of remote vendor web servers hosting the plurality of vendor web sites;

receiving a processing result from each of the plurality of remote vendor web servers the at least one remote vendor web server at the server system, the processing result generated by each of the plurality of remote vendor web servers the at least one remote vendor web server based on the processed object and including at least a resulting web page;

determining whether further processing of each processing result is necessary to complete the selected function; and

transmitting at least one of each processing result and another output to the client system.

2. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising:

processing at the client system the at least one of the resulting web page and other output; and

prompting the user to select a command to perform on the resulting web page.

3. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein selecting an object from an electronic document displaying the function menu further comprises selecting an

object including at least one of text, a hyperlink, a picture, a sound file, a video file, and any selectable object included within the electronic document.

4. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein ~~selecting an object from an electronic document displaying the function menu~~ further comprises:

processing the selected object using optical character recognition (OCR);

extracting text from the selected object using OCR; and

transmitting at least a portion of the extracted text from the client system to the server system such that the server system processes the extracted text.

5. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein ~~selecting an object from an electronic document displaying the function menu~~ further comprises utilizing a text-grabbing algorithm to select the object.

6. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein displaying [[a]] ~~the~~ function menu on the client system further comprises enabling the user to designate a first web site as a target web site for a first function included within the function menu, and associate a first computer-implemented command with the first function executable using the first web site, the first computer-implemented command ~~associated with~~ ~~formatted by the user of the at least one client system to perform~~ a purchasing function ~~other than a search function at the target web site~~.

7. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein displaying [[a]] ~~the~~ function menu on the client system further comprises enabling the user to customize the function menu by selecting each function included within the function menu.

8. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein displaying [[a]] ~~the~~ function menu on the client system further comprises displaying [[a]] ~~the~~ function menu on the client system by utilizing at least one of a mouse, a keyboard, a track-ball, a joystick, a digitizing pad, a touch screen, a voice activation device, and any input device connected to the client system.

9. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein processing the selected object by applying the selected function at the server system further comprises:

applying the purchasing criteria user preference information to the selected object, wherein the purchasing criteria user preference information includes a first purchasing function associated with a first purchasing command and a plurality of URLs, the first purchasing command formatted to purchase an item corresponding to the selected object based on considering a purchase price for the item;

communicating with a vendor web server corresponding to each of the plurality of URLs;

generating a processing result at each of the vendor web servers by processing the selected object;

transmitting the processing results from each of the vendor web servers to the server system; and

processing each of the processing results at the server system before transmitting at least one resulting web page and other output to the client system.

10. (currently amended) A network based system for retrieving information, said system comprising:

a client system comprising a user interface and a browser;

a centralized database for storing information; and

a server system configured to be coupled to said client system and said database, said server system further configured to:

enable a user to select purchasing criteria input user preference information for storing in the database, the user preference information including a list of functions defined by the user for inclusion within a function menu, wherein each function is associated by the user with at least one universal resource locator (URL) and a computer-implemented command for performing the associated function, wherein the computer-

implemented command is configured by the user to perform the associated function at at least one remote vendor web server corresponding to the at least one associated URL;

enable the user to select an object from an electronic document displayed on said user interface;

display [[a]] the function menu on said user interface to prompt the user to select a desired function from the list of user-defined functions included within the function menu to apply the selected function to a to the selected object, the selected function including a purchasing function associated with a plurality of vendor web sites wherein the purchasing function automatically initiates a purchase of an item using the plurality of vendor web sites and the purchasing criteria, the item associated with the selected object, wherein the selected object is an object included within an electronic document displayed on said client system and identified by the user;

receive the selected object and the selected function from said client system;

process the selected object by applying the selected function and the purchasing criteria to the selected object to produce generate a processed object the process further including:

generate a plurality of retrieve from the database the at least one URL and the computer-implemented command associated with universal resource locators (URLs) based on the selected object and the selected function;

execute the retrieved computer-implemented command using the selected object to generate the processed object;

transmit the processed object from said server system to the plurality of remote vendor web servers at least one remote vendor web server in connection therewith corresponding to each of the plurality of URLs, the plurality of remote vendor web servers hosting the plurality of vendor web sites the at least one retrieved URL;

receive a processing result from ~~each of the plurality of remote vendor web servers the at least one remote vendor web server~~ at said server system, the processing result generated by ~~each of the plurality of remote vendor web servers the at least one remote vendor web server~~ based on the processed object and including at least a resulting web page;

determine whether further processing of each process result is necessary to complete the selected function; and

transmit at least one of each process result and another output to said client system.

11. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said client system configured to:

process the at least one of the resulting web page and other output; and

prompt the user to select a command to perform on the resulting web page.

12. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said client system configured to apply a text-grabbing algorithm to select the object.

13. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said client system configured to display a function menu on said user interface in response to a command from at least one of a mouse, a keyboard, a track-ball, a joystick, a digitizing pad, a touch screen, a voice activation device, and any input device connected to said client system.

14. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said client system further comprises at least one of a cell phone, a computer, a personal digital assistant (PDA), and a television.

15. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said server system further configured to:

process the selected object using optical character recognition (OCR);

extract text from the selected object using OCR; and

process at least a portion of the extracted text by applying the selected function.

16. (currently amended) A system in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said server system further configured to enable the user to designate a first web site as a target web site for a first function included within the function menu, and associate a first computer-implemented command with the first function executable using the first web site, the first computer-implemented command associated with formatted by the user to perform a purchasing function other than a search function at the target web site.

17. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said server system further configured to enable the user to customize the function menu by selecting each function included within the function menu.

18. (currently amended) A system in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said server system further configured to:

apply the purchasing criteria user preference information to the selected object, wherein the purchasing criteria user preference information includes a first purchasing function associated with a first purchasing command and a plurality of URLs, the first purchasing command formatted to purchase an item corresponding to the selected object based on considering a purchase price for the item;

communicate with a vendor web server corresponding to each of the plurality of URLs;

receive a processing result from each of said vendor web servers;

process each of the processing results; and

transmit at least one resulting web page and other output to said client system based on the processing results.

19. (currently amended) A computer program embedded on comprising a non-transitory computer readable medium having embodied thereon computer-executable instructions for

retrieving information using a server system coupled to a client system, a database, and a remote vendor web server, the client system including a user interface, said program comprising a code segment that computer-executable instructions cause the server system to:

store user preference information in the database including a list of functions defined by a user of the client system for inclusion within a function menu, wherein each function is associated by the user with at least one universal resource locator (URL) and a computer-implemented command for performing the associated function, wherein the computer-implemented command is configured by the user to perform the associated function at the remote vendor web server corresponding to the at least one associated URL;

prompts a prompt the user to select an object from an electronic document displayed on the user interface and then:

prompts the user to select purchasing criteria;

displays a display the function menu on the user interface to prompt the user to select a desired function from the list of user-defined functions included within the function menu to apply the selected function to a to the selected object, the selected function including a purchasing function associated with a plurality of vendor web sites wherein the purchasing function automatically initiates a purchase of an item using the plurality of vendor web sites, the item associated with the selected object;

transmits receive the selected object and the selected function from the client system to the server system;

processes process the selected object by applying the selected function and the purchasing criteria to the selected object at the server system to produce to generate a processed object, the process further includes:

generates a plurality of retrieving from the database the at least one URL and the computer-implemented command associated with universal resource locators (URLs) based on the selected object and the selected function;

executing the retrieved computer-implemented command using the selected object to generate the processed object;

transmits transmitting the processed object from the server system to the plurality of remote vendor web servers remote vendor web server corresponding to each of the plurality of URLs, the plurality of remote vendor web servers hosting each of the plurality of vendor web sites the at least one retrieved URL;

receives receiving a processing result from each of the plurality of remote vendor web servers the remote vendor web server at the server system, the processing result generated by each of the plurality of remote vendor web servers the remote vendor web server based on the processed object and including at least a resulting web page;

determines whether further processing of each process result is necessary to complete the selected function; and

transmits at least one of each process result and another output to the client system.

20. (original) A computer program in accordance with Claim 19 further comprising a code segment that:

processes at the client system the at least one of the resulting web page and other output; and

prompts the user to select a command to perform on the resulting web page.

21. (original) A computer program in accordance with Claim 19 further comprising a code segment that:

processes at the client system the selected object using optical character recognition (OCR);

extracts text from the selected object using OCR; and

transmits at least a portion of the extracted text from the client system to the server system for further processing.

22. (currently amended) A computer program in accordance with Claim 19 further comprising a code segment that utilizing utilizes a text-grabbing algorithm to select the object.

23. (currently amended) A computer program in accordance with Claim 19 further comprising a code segment that enables the user to designate a first web site as a target web site for a first function included within the function menu, and associate a first computer-implemented command with the first function executable using the first web site, the first computer-implemented command assoeiated with formatted by the user of the at least one client system to perform a purchasing function other than a search function at the target web site.

24. (original) A computer program in accordance with Claim 19 further comprising a code segment that enables the user to customize the function menu by selecting each function included within the function menu.

25. (currently amended) A computer program in accordance with Claim 19 further comprising a code segment that:

applies the purchasing criteria user preference information to the selected object, wherein the purchase criteria user preference information includes considering a first purchasing function associated with a first purchasing command and a plurality of URLs, the first purchasing command formatted to purchase an item corresponding to the selected object based on a purchase price for the item;

communicates with a vendor web server corresponding to each of the plurality of URLs;

receives a processing result from each of the vendor web servers;

processes each of the results at the server system; and

transmits at least one resulting web page and other output to the client system.